



NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 266.

Price, Five Cents.



SEEING THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO AVOID A COLLISION, NICK HALF ROSE, PREPARED TO JUMP. CRACK! WENT THE CRIMINAL'S REVOLVER.—(CHAPTER CCIV.)

NEW YORK





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No. 266.

NEW YORK, February 1, 1902.

Price Five Cents.

NICK CARTER'S ADVENTURES.

By the author of "NICHOLAS CARTER."

CHAPTER 172.

RAISING THE WIND.

Miss Ida Jones, Nick Carter's famous lady assistant, was writing at a plain table in a cheaply-furnished room of a boarding-house on Dover street, Boston.

She had been living there for several days, and at this moment was busy with her daily report to Nick.

Her letter to him was nearly finished when there was a knock at the door.

It was opened before she had time to speak, and a girl of singular beauty appeared upon the threshold.

"Belle, I want to ask you something," said the newcomer, abruptly.

As Miss Jones was in the Dover street boarding-house for professional reasons, it is hardly necessary to say that she was not known there by her true name.

Belle Adams was the name she had given to the landlady, and the name on the envelopes of letters she received from time to time.

"Come right in, Laura," Ida replied, "and ask anything you want to."

The girl entered, closed the door, and stood there a moment, hesitating.

She was rather above medium height, dark, and had brilliant black eyes.

Ida waited for her to speak.

"This is it, Belle," she said at last, crossing the room rapidly and dropping into a chair in front of Ida. "I've got to raise the wind. I've just got to!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Ida, "so have I."

"What! you don't mean to say that you're broke, too?"

"That's the limit," she said.

Laura looked disappointed.

"Two of a kind," she remarked. "I was hoping you had a lot of cash, for I was going to be bold enough to ask you to lend me some. We're down to rock bottom, pa and I."

"I'm awfully sorry," Ida responded. "I'd help you out gladly, if I had anything."

"I thought you would."

"And I'm not sure but what I can, anyway. You see, I was just going to ask my uncle——"

"You were?" interrupted Laura, excitedly. "I didn't know you would do that, or I would have suggested it myself. Some people, you know, object to asking their uncle for an advance."

"Why should they?" asked Ida, pretending surprise, and she added: "But I suppose it isn't everybody who has an uncle."

"Nonsense!" cried Laura, gayly, now. "Everybody has an uncle when it's a question of raising the wind—that is, if he or she has anything to hock."

Ida looked as if she were beginning to understand.

"You see," Laura went on, "I couldn't help thinking of your watch. You've got an elegant ticker, and it would be good for quite a raise, and if you're going to soak it anyway, you might let me have the use of the money for a day or two. I shouldn't be long in giving it back."

"I've no doubt about that," responded Ida, "but I hadn't thought of putting my watch in pawn. It was a really and truly uncle I meant."

"Oh!"

"I was just writing to him on this very matter. See!" and she handed her unfinished report to Nick to the girl.

"Do you want me to read it?" asked Laura.

"Certainly. Why shouldn't you? I've been telling him about you and you ought to know what I say."

"If it's anything bad I'll scratch your eyes out," said Laura, jokingly, and she read the letter.

What she read was as follows:

"My Dear Uncle:—I am having a very good time here, and am as well as could be. There is another girl in the house about my age, or a little younger. Her name is Laura Dash. We have become good friends, and I like her very much. We go about together a good deal, but I am afraid I shall have to stay in more than I want to because I am getting dreadfully short of money. Can't you let me have some at once? By return mail, please. You have no idea what a place Boston is to make the money fly. Laura lives here with her aged father. He is a sick man, and she is so devoted to him that she doesn't get out enough. I'd like to take her around some, for she has been very good to me. But that means money, uncle, dear, so get out your checkbook and send me some right away."

"Well," said Laura, as she passed the letter back, "I must say you make me out quite an angel."

"Why shouldn't I?" returned Ida. "Now, uncle never refuses me money, and when his check comes I'll gladly divide with you."

"That's awfully good of you, Belle, but I can't wait."

"It will be only two or three days."

"Two or three days! Bless your heart! I've got to have some money to-night."

"So soon?"

"Yes. The landlady won't wait. She'll turn us out to-night if I don't pay up for the two weeks we're owing."

"Horrible!"

"I should say so! You can see what that means for pa. I've got to raise the wind somehow. How about your watch now, Belle?"

"Well," said Ida, doubtfully, "it's a keepsake, you know. I should hate dreadfully to lose it."

"But there won't be any danger. I shall have plenty of money before the end of the week. The young man I'm engaged to will send me some. I've told you about him, you know."

"Yes," said Ida, and added to herself: "But not half as much as I wish you would."

"He's the smartest fellow in the State," went on Laura, "but he's had a little hard luck recently. He'll get out of it soon, and then we'll have money to burn."

Ida pretended to hesitate. Her mind was made up, but she did not think it would be good policy to let the girl know at once.

The reason for Ida's hesitation and her action generally may be understood by another glance at the letter she had written to her "dear uncle."

It was in cipher, and no one, except the Carter detectives, could have told what it really meant.

Nick would have read it about this way:

"Dear Nick:—I am still on good terms with Laura Dash, but I don't succeed in getting much out of her. She is evidently getting short of money, and I hope she will ask me to help her. I haven't the slightest doubt that she is thoroughly bad, but she certainly has her good side. She seems really devoted to her sick father, and sometimes I am almost sorry for her. In other words, she is quite a puzzle to me. If she asks me for money I shall help her, of course, so as to win

her gratitude. Then, perhaps, she'll take me into her confidence."

It is clear from the translation of this cipher letter that Ida was in the Dover street boarding-house for the purpose of watching the beautiful Laura Dash.

The circumstances that led to setting a watch upon Miss Dash may be stated briefly.

Patsy had captured a desperate murderer named Stetson. The murderer had escaped from a deputy sheriff who was taking him to jail. He was aided in his escape by a Salem dentist named Mason.

In the course of an attempt to trace Stetson's movements, Patsy had been captured and nearly killed by Mason and other criminals in the gang, but Chick, who had taken a hand in the case succeeded in capturing all of the crowd, except Stetson himself, who was still at large.

Then Nick, seeing that Stetson was a criminal of unusual cleverness and daring, decided to put all four of the detectives, himself included, into the work of running him down.

The dentist, Mason, had made a partial confession, in which he had made it known that Stetson was in love with a girl named Laura Dash.

Ida, therefore, was detailed to get acquainted with Miss Dash, for, from what had happened previously, the detectives believed that Stetson might be bold enough to call on her.

While she was performing her part of the work, the men were scattered about the country north of Boston—one in Salem, one around Stetson's former home near Newburyport, and another following up clues that pointed toward Concord.

"Well," said Ida, suddenly, "I'll do it. Show me the way to your uncle's."

"I'll get ready at once," replied Laura.

As soon as she had left the room, Ida finished her letter to Nick, adding that her help had been asked, as she hoped.

"I can't let her be turned out of the house," Ida wrote, "for then it would be impossible to watch her."

In a few minutes she joined Laura in the lower hall, and they went out together.

"I've half changed my mind," said Laura, as they started toward Washington street.

"What do you mean? You still need money, don't you?"

"Oh! I've got to have it, but there are other ways, besides hocking a watch. I guess you can think of some, can't you?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Ida, quickly.

She had led Laura to suppose that she had been discharged from a store for robbing the money-drawer, and that she had been mixed up in other crooked transactions.

"I was thinking," continued Laura, "that it would be too bad for you to go without your watch, even for a few days, if there should be any other way of raising boodle. I might find a pocketbook on the sidewalk, you know."

"Certainly."

"Well, you've got enough for car fares. Let's go up-town."

They took a cab, and when it was passing Jordan & Marsh's big store, Laura said:

"We will go in here. They are advertising some lovely things that I might like to get."

For some minutes they wandered around in the store, without stopping at any of the counters.

Laura spoke from time to time about the goods she saw. "I like that," she would say, or, "That might go very well with my blue waist."

Ida replied in the same way.

The store was crowded. Finally, they pushed into a jam by a counter and Laura went to examining the articles for sale there.

"I don't see just what I want," she said, at last, and turned away.

Ida, watching all the time, saw that she had hidden a small roll of valuable silk beneath her jacket.

They went to another counter where real lace was on sale.

A good many dollars' worth of the stuff could be covered by one hand.

Laura fingered and examined it and asked prices,

until she saw her chance, when she quietly took a quantity and put that also beneath her jacket.

The salesman didn't notice, and Ida was astonished at the skill the girl showed in the work.

"This is one way of raising the wind," she thought, "and I wouldn't have suspected what she was doing, if I hadn't watched every move. I wish she'd hurry up and get done with it. I should hate to be caught with a shoplifter."

They were slowly edging their way from the lace counter when Ida's blood seemed to freeze.

A few feet away was a man whom she knew to be the store detective.

He was looking straight at Laura, and Ida knew that the girl was under suspicion.

CHAPTER 173.

FOOLING THE DETECTIVE.

For one instant, Ida wondered if it would not be better to let the girl be arrested.

That might bring her lover, Stetson, to her aid.

Then she thought that Stetson would be too shrewd to show himself to officers of the law, as he would have to if he called on Laura at a police station, or tried to give bail for her.

"No!" thought Ida, "I must let her escape and get arrested myself!"

She pressed closer to the girl.

"Laura," she whispered, "don't turn a hair, but you're spotted."

There was no need of the warning.

The beautiful shoplifter's face never blanched, her lips were perfectly steady, and her eyes glowed with pleasure as she pointed to a handsome shawl hanging on a frame.

"Isn't that shawl lovely!" she murmured. "I wonder how much it costs. Where is he, Belle?"

This last was in a whisper.

"You'd better not know," returned Ida.

"I'd rather. Then I shall be even better on my guard."

"Well, then, he's the man with his back half toward you near the post."

"Are you sure he's on?"

"Sure! Here, Laura, pass your stuff to me."

"What——"

"I think I can bluff him down. If he stops you he'll find nothing. Leave the store and wait for me in the lunchroom, corner of Winter street. If I bluff him, I'll be with you quickly. If not, why——"

"You won't let yourself be caught instead of me!"

"Why not? I have no sick father to take care of."

This conversation, of course, had been carried on in whispers while they were still in the thick of the crowd and while they were pretending to examine the shawl.

The store detective was simply waiting for them to come along, for he did not care to make a disturbance by pushing into the crowd after them.

The transfer of stolen articles was made quickly, and the girls worked their way out of the crowd.

As Ida had expected, they were no sooner clear of the crush than the man at the post turned about and spoke to them.

"Excuse me, ladies," he said, politely, "but I shall have to ask you to step into the waiting-room for a moment."

"What for, I should like to know?" demanded Laura.

Ida said nothing, but looked indignantly at the detective.

"I will explain there," he said. "You will save yourselves a good deal of trouble by going at once."

Laura turned with blazing eyes to Ida.

"Are you going?" she asked.

"I suppose we'd better," Ida answered. "I don't understand it, but if he thinks there is anything wrong we can satisfy him more easily there than here."

"Very well, then, but I think it's an outrage."

He walked beside them to the elevator and went up with them.

In the waiting-room he called to a woman em-

ployed in the store, and when she had come up, he said:

"Now, ladies, I will ask you plainly, have you forgotten to pay for anything?"

"Forgotten to pay!" echoed Laura, her black eyes wide open and flashing.

"If you have," continued the detective, quietly, "and will make up the amount now, we will say nothing more about it."

Laura stamped her foot, and was about to make an angry retort, when Ida interrupted coldly:

"I see that you suspect us of shoplifting. You are making a great mistake, and if you give us trouble I shall see that the store suffers for it."

"I've heard that sort of threat before," responded the detective, "and it doesn't frighten me. I saw that young woman take goods from a counter and hide them underneath her jacket."

He indicated Laura.

"Oh! you did!" she cried, unbuttoning her jacket and holding it wide open. "What do you say now?"

The detective's face fell. He had been very sure that the stolen articles had not been transferred, but he was absolutely sure that he had seen them stolen.

"Search her," he said to the woman.

Laura put up a great deal of indignation, but she went into a private room with the woman, and remained there for some minutes.

When they came out, the woman said:

"I found nothing."

"Nothing!" echoed the detective.

"Is that all you can say?" Laura demanded, hotly.

"No," he answered; "I am ready to apologize, if I have made a mistake. We have to be very careful in the store——"

"Bah! you don't need to insult a respectable customer."

Ida had remained silent in the waiting-room with the detective while the woman was searching Laura.

Now she said:

"I wouldn't stay in the store another minute, if I were you, my dear."

"I won't," returned Laura. "Come along."

"One moment," interrupted the detective, speaking to Ida; "if you are innocent, you won't object to proving it, will you? Wouldn't you rather prove it——"

"Certainly," said Ida. "You needn't wait for me, my dear. I will join you in some store where they don't treat customers so badly."

Laura took the cue at once, and marched out, wondering how her new friend would manage to avoid exposure, and fearing that she would not succeed.

Obedying the detective's order, Ida went into the private room with the woman.

There she took off her long cloak and shook it, and the woman felt of it carefully.

For several minutes the woman searched, and Ida said not a word. She did everything she was told to do, and at last the woman drew a long breath.

"There's evidently been some mistake," she said. She called in the detective.

Ida was, of course, fully dressed, except that her cloak lay on a table.

She was seated in a chair beside it.

"Mr. Henderson," said the woman, "I am afraid you'll have to apologize humbly."

"I will if I have to," he answered. "Haven't you found anything?"

"Not a thing."

"Then I apologize, but I cannot understand it, for, while I have been waiting, I have had reports from two counters. A small roll of silk is missing from one, and a valuable piece of lace from the other. I was positive that I saw one of these young women take them."

"You did," remarked Ida, quietly. "Here they are."

She held out her hand to the astonished detective, and he saw the missing articles.

"What!" he began, and couldn't think what to say. So he turned inquiringly to the woman.

"I don't know what to make of it," she said, faintly. "I looked her all over."

"So you did," said Ida, "but the articles were here all the time."

"What does this mean?" demanded the detective.

"It means," replied Ida, laying the stolen articles on her cloak and turning up its edge, "that you and I ought to become acquainted."

She showed them a little pocket concealed in the edge of her cloak and took from it a card case.

Removing a card, she handed it to the detective. He read:

NICHOLAS CARTER,

Detective.

Presented by Miss Ida Jones.

"Good gracious!" said he, "do you mean to say that you are Miss Jones?"

"I am for the present," she answered, "but when I am with the young woman whom you cleverly detected in shoplifting, I am another person."

"Then——"

"That girl is a crook. I hardly need to say that, but I am shadowing her for a very important purpose. I didn't know when she led me into the store that she intended to steal anything, but when I saw that was what she was up to, I had to let her go on, for if she should be arrested for this little crime it would ruin our plan for catching a greater criminal than she is."

"So I had to manage things in such a way that she would appear to be innocent."

"She passed the articles to you, then?"

"Yes, at my request. I told her I could bluff you."

"Well, you did, both of us; but I don't see how you managed it."

"Don't you? Would you like to take the stolen articles?"

As she spoke, Ida stood up and took the articles from her cloak, advancing a step toward the detective and holding out her hand.

He reached out his hand for them, and then drew back in surprise.

Ida's hand was empty.

"Oh!" she cried, with a laugh, "I must have dropped them."

She looked at the floor, as if to hunt for them.

The detective and the woman looked, too.

"Ah!" said Ida, to the woman, "I see now. You took the lace."

"I?" exclaimed the woman. "I haven't touched it. What do you mean?"

"What's that hanging from your belt?" returned Ida.

The woman looked and saw the stolen lace hanging at her side.

"How did it get there?" she asked, in amazement. Ida laughed again.

"Mr. Henderson," she said, "did you take the roll of silk?"

"I certainly didn't," he answered.

"Oh! I thought you did. Then, you might look under my cloak for it."

He stepped to the table and raised the cloak.

There was nothing under it.

"Failed that time, didn't you?" he asked, smiling.

"No; it was you who failed. You said you didn't take the roll. Examine your pockets."

He did as he was told and presently drew the stolen roll from a side pocket of his coat.

He looked very foolish as he turned it over and over.

"That's the article, isn't it?" asked Ida, shaking with laughter.

"It is," he replied. "I must say——"

"That you now understand why these things were not found on me when I was searched. It was really very simple. Nick Carter taught me sleight-of-hand when he first employed me as an assistant. I keep in practice for the fun of it, but I don't often have to use it in my business."

"You are certainly skillful."

"I ought to be, with such a teacher. I hope you are entirely satisfied."

"I am, and I suppose you want to go at once to join your victim."

"Yes; but there's no great hurry. She'll wait for me. She is broke and thinks that I am. I will pay

for these articles, if you please, and will ask you to get me a ring, or some other small piece of jewelry from that department that is worth about twenty dollars. How much are these things?"

"Fifteen dollars."

"That will make thirty-five dollars altogether."

Ida took up her cloak again and showed them another concealed pocket, from which she took the money required, and Henderson sent for a twenty-dollar ring.

While that was coming, Ida showed them more about her cloak. It was very much like the coats that the men-detectives used, fitted with many pockets that only they themselves knew how to find.

"You didn't notice this, did you?" she asked of the woman, indicating a rather large pocket.

"I didn't. Now that you show it I wonder I failed to see it."

"Well, as you missed it, I will put these articles in it and tell my friend that you couldn't find them. She'll think I'm an expert thief, won't she?"

When the ring was brought, therefore, Ida slipped it with the silk and lace into the concealed pocket.

Then she said good-day to the detectives and left the store.

CHAPTER 174.

IDA MAKES A DISCOVERY.

Laura was waiting, as Ida had directed, in the lunchroom. One side of this place was used for the sale of candy.

The shoplifter was looking very anxious as Ida crossed the street, and her eyes flashed with excitement when at last Ida entered.

"I thought you were never coming!" she whispered. "I was sure they had sent you to the station."

"Not they!" replied Ida, scornfully.

"But what about the stuff?"

"They didn't find anything on me."

"You had a chance to drop it, then?"

"No."

Laura looked her wonder.

"I've got it," said Ida, "and better yet, I've added to the collection."

"Good gracious! what a girl you are! Come somewhere and show me, quick."

They went from the lunchroom to the store of R. H. White, where they continued their talk in the ladies' parlor.

"I pinched a box of bonbons in that place at the corner," said Laura; "have some?"

She held out the box. It was already half empty, for, having stolen it from the counter, she had calmly stood there eating the candy, in plain view of the saleswomen.

This was a little too much for Ida. She felt compelled to help the beautiful criminal out of her shop-lifting sorape, but she didn't like the idea of receiving stolen goods, even when they were no more valuable than candy.

"No, thank you," she answered, "I hate candy."

"That's a shame. These are awfully good. But, tell me, how did you do it?"

Ida opened her cloak.

"See anything?" she asked.

"No."

"Neither did they, but look!"

With a quick motion, she drew the three articles from the concealed pocket.

Laura's eyes bulged with surprise.

"You had them all the time?" she asked.

"Yes."

"And that cloak——"

"Do you suppose this is the first time I've used it? I had it made this way on purpose."

"My stars! what an idea! Why didn't you tell me about it?"

"Because you didn't say that you were going to pinch anything. I didn't know what you were going to do till you had done it."

"I see. I'll let you know next time. But what's this?"

She had noticed the tiny box in which was the ring that Ida had bought.

Before waiting for a reply, she opened it.

"Great Scott!" she gasped, "isn't it a beaut!"

"You see," explained Ida, "after they found that I was innocent, they apologized to beat the band, and actually begged me to make myself at home in the store. Just to show that I had no hard feelings, I did so, and took this from the jewelry department."

"Oh! aren't you smart!"

"I've been there before," replied Ida, modestly. "I thought it might help you out."

"Do you mean that you're going to give this to me?"

"Certainly. I can get along till my uncle sends me money."

"I should say you could if this is the way you can do the pinch business. I'm awfully obliged, Belle."

"You can raise enough from these things to pay the landlady, can't you?"

"Oh! easy. I must get about it right away."

Ida was glad to hear this, for she had feared that Laura would take further risks by lifting from other stores.

It was for that reason that she had bought the ring, so as to make more stealing unnecessary.

"Where do you look for pawnshops in this town?" asked Ida, as if she didn't know all about them already.

Laura hesitated. They were going down the stairs of the store to the street.

"There are lots of them," she said. "You mustn't think that you've got to go poking into pawnshops with me, Belle. We haven't got to soak your watch now, you see."

"But I should enjoy going with you."

"And I should like to have you, but—see here, Belle!"

They had come to the sidewalk, and Laura turned about suddenly and faced Ida.

"Well?" said the latter.

"I don't believe I'll let you go with me any further. You don't mind if I speak bluntly, do you?"

"Not at all, Laura; but what's the matter?"

"Nothing is the matter. I've got a secret that I haven't a right to give away to anybody, not even to you. The fact is, that I'm not going to a pawnshop."

"Oh!"

"If we'd had to soak your watch, of course we would have taken it to my uncle somewhere, but, you see, I don't want to see these things again."

"Ah! you mean to sell them."

"Exactly. I can get more out of them that way. And that's all I mean to say about it."

"All right, Laura, I'll go back to the house. Only——"

"Only what?"

"I might like to know a good fence for myself some time."

Laura looked sharply at Ida, and then smiled.

"You're no chicken, are you?" she said.

"I know what a fence is."

"Well, so do I, and I'll tell you this much. Whenever you need a fence let me know, and I'll either take you to one, or I'll handle your stuff for you."

"Very well, but tell me all about it when you get back, won't you?"

"Sure!"

"I'm crazy to know how much you'll get for the things."

"I'll let you know, and I'll lend you some if I have enough to spare."

"Thank you. Good-by."

"So long, Belle."

Ida started toward Dover street, but she had not gone far, when she pretended to see something in a store window that interested her.

Standing still, she glanced back, and saw Laura get aboard an East Boston car.

Boston streets are narrow and crooked, and cars cannot go at high speed through the heart of the city.

It was not difficult, therefore, for Ida to keep that car in view

She walked until she found an empty herdic, which she engaged, and told the driver to follow the line taken by East Boston cars and not to hurry.

From the cab window, a little later, she saw Laura leave the car and disappear down a street leading east.

Ida was then in Hanover street.

She left the cab and hurried after Laura on foot.

Luckily, as it seemed at the time, Laura was not walking fast, and Ida soon was in sight of her.

She turned into North street, and the detective was near enough to see her open the second door from the corner.

That was nearly as much as Ida wanted, but she thought it would be well to look a little further.

Patsy had had a theory that Stetson operated through a fence in Boston, and up to this time none of the detectives had been able to get any clew as to where it was.

Ida believed that Laura Dash would take her stolen goods to the fence used by her lover.

It was in the hope of finding it that she had followed the shoplifter.

So, having noticed that there were a number of alleys and crooked streets in that neighborhood, she turned back for the purpose of strolling around to see where they led and how they connected; for it was almost certain that there would be a way to get out from the fence at the back.

The more information she could get, the better, she thought.

She had explored three or four alleys, always taking care not to go in front of the building Laura had entered, lest the shoplifter should see her, when the side door of a building that faced on North street opened, and who should come out but Laura Dash!

It was very awkward for Ida, who, however, began to laugh as if she enjoyed the situation.

Laura was immensely surprised.

She started as if she would dodge back into the building, and then stood still, her eyes blazing angrily.

"You followed me!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," Ida admitted; "I couldn't help it. I was just dying of curiosity."

"Then why didn't you die?"

The words were hissed forth fiercely.

"Why!" said Ida, as if surprised at the tone, "I didn't suppose it would do any harm. I lost your track, you see and only came on you by accident."

"I don't believe it."

Ida put on a look to show that her feelings were hurt.

"How can you say that?" she asked. "I thought we were such good friends."

"So we were," retorted Laura, "but no friend of mine goes tagging around where she isn't wanted. I suspected that you'd do just this, Belle Adams, and I took pains to make it easy for you, so that I could catch you at it and fool you."

"Why, Laura!"

"Don't talk to me! You said yourself you'd like to know where my fence was. I knew you'd try to sneak after me, and so I led you wrong. You haven't found out, Belle, for it isn't here or anywhere near here."

"I'm awfully sorry," Ida began.

"You'd better be. Now, if you want to have me speak to you again, you go straight home. I shall attend to my business and I won't be spied on by anybody, friend or not."

"I hope you don't forget," said Ida, meekly, "that I helped you out of a bad scrape at Jordan & Marsh's."

Laura's angry look softened a little.

"That's so," she admitted. "You did a good turn by me there, two good turns, in fact, but seriously, Belle, you mustn't try to get my secret. It isn't fair or friendly."

"Well," responded Ida, "I'll go home now. Do come in and see me when you get back, so that I can know you forgive me."

"That will depend on whether you go straight to the house."

With this, Laura wheeled about, and walked toward North street, where she disappeared around the corner.

Ida made no attempt to follow her.

Laura's hands were empty, which showed that she had got rid of her supposed stolen goods.

So Ida went directly back to the boarding-house and waited.

All the afternoon passed, and there was no sign of Laura.

Ida wondered if she had tried more shoplifting and got caught at it?

Every now and then she made an excuse to go down the stairs to the ground floor, thus passing the rooms occupied by Laura and her sick father.

She did not hear their voices, and, in fact, the landlady told her that Miss Dash had not come in.

On one of these trips she saw a trunk being carried from the second floor back room, which was next to Mr. Dash's room.

"Somebody going away?" Ida asked the landlady.

"Yes," was the reply, "I might as well have an empty room as a boarder who doesn't pay his bills."

"That's so."

"There are others who will have to look out for themselves," continued the landlady, with a glance toward Mr. Dash's room. "I don't keep a charity house, I don't. I can be kind to people a little while, but if they haven't got money, how can they expect me to keep them?"

Ida said they shouldn't expect it, and went back to her room. Evidently Laura's fear of being turned out was real.

If she had obtained money enough for her bill, why didn't she return?

At last, when it had grown dark, Ida, on one of her trips downstairs, heard Laura's voice in her father's room.

It was impossible to hear a word, and Ida would not have risked listening in the hall anyway.

Suddenly she thought of the empty room.

The door was not locked, and Ida went in quietly.

In there the voice was more distinct, but even then it was nothing but a murmur.

She heard, too, the deeper murmur of Mr. Dash's voice.

There was a closet on that side of the room.

Ida stepped into it, and then found that the partition was so thin that most of the spoken words came to her distinctly.

At first they were somewhat obscured by the sound of footsteps.

Somebody was pacing up and down the room.

Laura? They did not sound like the steps of a girl.

Mr. Dash? But he was a sick man. He couldn't walk with so much energy. Ida had seen him come to the dinner-table so feebly that it seemed as if he would fall every minute.

The man's voice, too——

But while Ida was getting these first impressions, she heard Mr. Dash say:

"I tell you, Laura, that woman is a detective!"

"But why should she help me?" responded Laura.

"Why should she stand by and let me pinch things? and she said she pinched the ring herself."

"Bah!"

Mr. Dash never spoke that way at the table.

His voice there was thin and weak.

This was his voice, but how strong it sounded!

"Tell me!" insisted Laura; "why should she let me lift things in the store and not have me arrested? If she's a detective——"

"Because," interrupted the deeper voice, harshly, "she's after bigger game."

"Bigger game?" repeated Laura; "bigger game than me? what——"

"Yes! bigger game than a mere shoplifter! Oh! you have put your foot in it up to the neck! I'll tell you if you don't begin to see for yourself. This woman, I'll bet my head, is——"

And Ida Jones did not wait to hear her name pronounced. She did not wait for Mr. Dash's explanation of what the bigger game was.

For Ida had made a discovery.

How it came to her she could not tell, and neither could she tell why she had not made the discovery sooner.

She slipped out of that closet in a hurry, believing, may, certain, that aged, sick "Mr. Dash," Laura's father, was none other than the desperate criminal, Leander Stetson, that they were all hunting for!

CHAPTER 175.

A MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

"Ah!" thought Ida, "if only Nick, or one of the others, were here!"

She knew from what Patsy had told her that Stetson was a man of muscular strength, almost equal to that of Nick himself.

There never was a more desperate, cold-blooded criminal than he.

It would have been nothing but madness for Ida to try to capture him single-handed.

Such feats were not expected of her. She had had struggles with criminals, but she never attempted the impossible when she could help it.

There was not only Stetson, or "Mr. Dash," to reckon with, but the beautiful Laura, who, Ida did not doubt, would be a furious fighter.

So, much as the detective would have liked to rush into that room where they were talking and demand Stetson's surrender, she did not dream of doing so.

There was a better way.

It was the way that Nick had not only advised, but commanded her to take if any emergency should arise.

While none of them had dreamed that Stetson was actually living in Boston, they did think he might visit Miss Dash, and in that case it was Ida's duty to notify the nearest police station.

Ida hastened to her room, caught up her hat and cloak, and put them on as she went downstairs.

As she crossed the second floor hall again she heard the murmur of voices, or rather of "Dash's."

Probably he was still explaining his theory of the woman detective to Laura.

"They ought to be good for a half-hour's talk," thought Ida, "and I can get the police here in much less time than that."

She ran to the corner of Washington street.

There she saw a public telephone office.

Anxious to save every minute, she went in, and rang up the station.

"This is Belle Adams," she said over the wire; "do you understand?"

"Belle Adams?" repeated the sergeant in charge.

"Oh! on the Stetson case, eh?"

"Yes."

"Anything turned up?"

"He is at my house now."

"Great——"

"Wait! there isn't a moment to lose. Will you send a couple of men up at once?"

"I'll send half-a-dozen!"

"They must be armed and ready for a struggle."

"Never fear! Will they ask for you?"

"No. Ask for or get Mr. Dash."

"Who's he?"

"He's supposed to be the father of Laura, the girl I've been watching. In reality he's the man you want."

"All right, then. We'll be there in less than no time."

"I wish they were there now," sighed Ida, as she hung up the receiver.

There was a little delay for her when she paid the charge for use of the 'phone, other customers being ahead of her, but altogether, she had not lost more than a minute by it, and she had not been absent five minutes from the house when she started back.

A good many persons were on the street at the time. She glanced at all she met or passed, and also kept her attention on the steps leading to her boarding house.

She could see them by the light of a street lamp directly in front of the house plainly enough to see whether any went up or down.

Nobody left the house during her walk back, and she felt some relief as she opened the door and went in.

On the way to her room, she listened again for the murmur of voices.

No sound came to her.

Hurriedly, and in great fear, she again went to the closet where she had heard everything distinctly before.

Not a sound.

Ida ran up to her own room, looked in, tossed off her hat and cloak, and ran downstairs.

On the ground floor she met the landlady.

"Has Mr. Dash gone out?" she asked.

"Mr. Dash! bless you, no! How could he? He's such a feeble old man."

"I thought he had gone with his daughter."

"No. He's probably lying down in his room. She went out a few minutes ago."

"Oh!" and Ida's voice was suddenly faint. "Was she alone?"

"No, a gentleman went with her who had been to call on her father."

"Was he a tall man?"

The landlady drew herself up proudly.

"Seems to me you ask a good many questions about my boarders, Miss Adams," she said.

"Believe me," responded Ida, earnestly, "they are necessary questions, and I have the right to ask them. I will explain soon. Please let me know about this caller."

"I can't tell you anything about him, Miss Adams. Not but what I would if I could, for I think you are a proper sort of young lady and wouldn't want to know unless it was right——"

Ida could not listen to a lecture, and she interrupted:

"Was he tall, Mrs. Billings?"

"Yes, I should say so. I didn't measure him, and I really don't know a thing else, for I never saw him before."

"When did he come in?"

"I don't know, for I only saw him go out."

"Wh-a-a-at!"

"Goodness! you're not going to faint away, are you?"

"No," said Ida, suddenly calm, "I am not, but I am fearfully disappointed."

Without another word, she went into the sitting-room to wait for the arrival of the police.

She knew what had happened.

When the police came—there were six of them—Mrs. Billings met them at the door, and then it was her turn to look and act as if she were going to faint away.

"What can you want in my house?" she gasped.

"We want Mr. Dash," replied the roundsman, who commanded the squad.

"What! that poor sick——"

"Don't delay us. Send for him."

"But he can hardly walk."

"Then show us his room."

Ida sat silent. She really felt too bad to take any part in the matter.

Mrs. Billings pointed to the second floor door, and the policemen went up.

A knock brought no response. The door was locked, and Mrs. Billings was obliged to furnish a key.

Both rooms were found empty.

"Of course they'll come back," stammered Mrs. Billings, looking around. "You see, they've left everything just as usual. There's Miss Dash's umbrella, those are her books and things on the table, and here," she opened a closet door, "here are lots of Miss Dash's clothes. Of course they'll come back."

"Gone out for a walk, I suppose," suggested the roundsman.

"Likely, though whoever would have supposed that Mr. Dash would dare to go out in the evening air, and him so feeble that he could hardly walk across the floor?"

"Where's Miss Adams?"

"Goodness! do you want her, too? She's in the sitting-room."

But "Miss Adams" was not in the sitting-room when the roundsman looked in, and she was not in her own room.

Ida had gone to the police station to explain the situation to the captain, rather than have a long talk in the boarding-house.

The roundsman found her there when he returned with his men from their fruitless errand.

"Stetson and Laura must have left the house within a minute after I did," she said. "Of course they won't come back. It would be like him to go into some house near on the pretence of looking for rooms, and watch from a window until he saw the police hunting for him. I never suspected that the old man was not Laura's father until I heard his voice this afternoon."

The station detectives, of course, did a good deal of work that evening hunting for traces of Stetson and Laura, but it may as well be said at once that they found none.

The couple had apparently walked quietly down Dover street and disappeared.

Ida sent cipher dispatches to Nick, Chick and Patsy, telling them what had happened, and addressing the telegrams to places where she thought it likely that the detectives would be.

Then she thought how the visit of the police would be known to all the boarders, and she took supper in a restaurant, in order to avoid their questions.

About eight o'clock she returned to the house.

Mrs. Billings evidently had been waiting for her, for she hastily came from the sitting-room, and stood in her way.

"So you gave the police the slip, did you?" she demanded. "Well, all I've got to say is that you don't take another step in my house. Go right out. You shan't hide here any longer."

Ida stared in surprise for a moment, and then began to laugh heartily.

She hadn't known that the police had asked for her, and it hadn't struck her that the landlady would misunderstand.

"Oh! you brazen-faced hussy!" cried Mrs. Billings; "you stand there and laugh, do you? If I only had a telephone, I'd summon the police to come for you, and I'd hold you till they got here."

"You'd have a hard job of it, Mrs. Billings," said Ida, "and if you had a telephone the police wouldn't have had a useless call here to-day."

"What do you mean?"

"Let me go with you to your room, or anywhere, where we can be alone, and I'll explain."

A number of the boarders were standing in doorways listening.

"Look out for her, Mrs. Billings!" said one of them.

"Don't you trust her," said another.

It all seemed so comic to Ida that she laughed again, and that made Mrs. Billings angry.

"Out of my house!" she cried.

"I'll go if you really mean it," said the detective, "but let me tell you a better way. Bring a cord and tie my hands and feet. Then I'll sit here on the stairs until you can bring a policeman. In his presence I'll tell Mrs. Billings all about it, but I sha'n't say a word for the benefit of the rest of you."

She sat down on the stairs as she spoke.

Mrs. Billings looked hard at her for a moment, and then said:

"Come with me."

She led the way to the dining-room, which was then empty.

Ida then said frankly that she was a detective.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Mrs. Billings, "that's only a little worse than being a thief! If I had known that I shouldn't have let you have a room. The idea! I can't have persons in my house who are forever bringing the police to it."

"You'd rather have Mr. and Miss Dash, I suppose."

"If they pay their bills. I don't know anything against them."

"They are criminals."

"What!"

"Have they paid their bill?"

"No."

"You've seen the last of them."

"Are you sure?"

"Will they come back here to be arrested? They know that I am a detective."

"Oh, my! oh, my!" groaned the landlady. "The shame of it! To think of having criminals in my house! and they owing three weeks' board, too, for I haven't had a cent from them since Mr. Dash came to board with his daughter."

"Ah!" thought Ida, "if I had known that Mr. Dash had been here so short a time I might have suspected who he was earlier."

But she said aloud that it would be better to say nothing to the other boarders or anybody else about the matter.

Mrs. Billings declared that she was too ashamed of the whole affair to mention it to a soul, and Ida said that she would leave the house the next day.

At that the landlady begged her to stay as long as she wanted to, and Ida answered that she could not tell how long her business would keep her in Boston, or where it would take her next.

Ida then went to her room. Her telegram to Nick had been very short, and she now wrote a long report of what had happened, and mailed it in a street box near by.

It was then bedtime, and she lay down, but she could not sleep. She was greatly troubled by the thought that the criminals had slipped from her grasp.

As a matter of fact, Ida was somewhat ashamed of herself, although she had no reason for being so.

"I ought to succeed in doing something in this case," she said to herself. "I've had one chance and lost it. What can I do?"

Suddenly she thought of the fence.

Why not try to get evidence against it, and lead the police in a raid upon it?

Nick would be pleased, for that was one of the things the four detectives were trying to do.

She got up and dressed.

It was then nearly midnight.

When she was almost ready to go, she had another thought about the matter.

She had been near the fence once, and if she went

again as a woman, some shrewd crook might recognize her.

It was a small chance, but Ida would take no risks.

"I'll go as a boy," she decided.

So she stepped into her closet to get the necessary clothing.

While she was picking it out, she heard the click of her door knob.

Quickly dropping the clothes, she stepped into the room again.

Laura Dash stood before her.

CHAPTER 176.

WIT AGAINST STRENGTH.

For a moment neither spoke.

Laura stood perfectly still, but her black eyes blazed with excitement.

Her arms were folded.

"I wasn't expecting you so late," said Ida. "Did you have trouble in raising the money you needed?"

"You snake!" hissed Laura.

Ida smiled.

"Sit down," she said, "and tell about it."

"I won't sit down," returned Laura. "I'll stand up and tell you what I have to say."

"Suit yourself."

"You betrayed me."

"Did I?"

"Don't try to deny it. I know you now. You came here to spy upon me, hoping to trap my lover. He says you are Ida Jones, Nick Carter's woman detective. I don't know whether you are or not, but I do know that you are my deadly enemy!"

"I hardly thought you'd come back to tell me that," said Ida.

"You didn't suppose I'd dare come back at all. That's what you mean. So you left your door unlocked, and you didn't think that I would have the sense when I left the house to take the key to the outside door with me. I did, and here I am. Nobody knows I am in the house except you."

"That's interesting."

"You'll find it so in a minute. I just want you to understand first that my lover easily got to a place of safety. Oh! you were very cunning, but we tricked you."

"You certainly did."

"You deceived me with your fairy tales about

shoplifting, but he saw through it all as soon as I told him."

"Did you come back so as to give me a clew, and let me try again?"

"I did not! I shall leave the house as quietly as I entered it, and when I go you will stay here—dead!"

"I see."

It need not be said that Ida perceived the girl's deadly purpose from the start, and she regretted that her cloak lay across a chair on the further side of the room.

In it was one of her revolvers and a pair of bracelets that would have looked mighty well just then on Miss Dash's wrists.

The detective could not get at her weapon without passing Laura.

"She'll spring at me," thought Ida, "and the sooner it's over the better."

Accordingly, when she spoke the last time, the detective made what seemed to be a careless movement.

Instantly the beautiful criminal leaped.

She unfolded her arms, and a gleaming dagger flashed in her right hand.

Ida caught her descending hand and tried the trick Nick Carter had taught her of wrenching the dagger away.

For once it failed.

Laura Dash knew that trick, and a laugh hissed from her lips as she saw that the detective, though avoiding the first blow, had not succeeded in what she tried to do.

The only thing that Ida could do then was to grapple with her foe, and she did so.

Almost silently they strained at each other.

The criminal had the strength and fury of a tigress.

Strive as she would, the well-trained detective could not overcome her.

It was all that Ida could do to prevent Laura from forcing the knife into her side.

Once, twice, three times Laura pressed the keen point against her.

Rents were made in Ida's clothing, but each time, by a terrible effort, she pushed the blade away.

And all the time they hardly stirred in their tracks.

There was no tumbling about, no noise, no shaking of the floor.

The boarders in the rooms below slept through it all.

Of course Ida could have aroused them by screams, but that wasn't her way of doing things.

A Carter detective fights it out alone and wins, if he can, on his own strength or wit.

Ida saw very clearly that strength would not save her.

She had met her match.

Besides, Laura fought with insane fury, maddened to desperation by thought of her lover.

The last time the criminal forced the point of the dagger against Ida, the weapon touched her shoulder.

They had moved a very little, and the criminal had the advantage, for she could brace one foot against the wall, and so give all her strength to driving the blade slowly, but surely in.

Ida felt a sting like a pin prick, as the point touched her flesh.

Her left hand clutched the criminal's right wrist; her right was holding the other's left away from her own throat.

Quickly Ida let go with her right.

She added that hand to the other's hold on Laura's wrist.

Then the detective suddenly lifted her feet from the floor.

Her whole weight, therefore, hung on the criminal's dagger arm.

Slowly, but steadily, down came the knife, cutting a long rent in the detective's dress, that ended as low as the waist line.

From the hole made a revolver dropped to the floor between them.

It had been in a concealed pocket of Ida's waist, and it was forced out by the passing of the knife.

As Laura's position now was such she could not force the knife into Ida, she drew back a little for a fresh start.

Instantly, Ida pushed with both her hands and leaped away.

And, in so doing, she managed to force the knife from Laura's hand, but she did not succeed in getting it herself.

The dagger dropped to the floor beside the revolver.

For the shortest instant the foes were separated.

Then both sprang for the weapons.

Laura stooped quicker than Ida, and caught up both dagger and revolver.

She was panting from the struggle, and her face was as red as fire.

"All right," she gasped, "if I can't make the knife do its work, I'll risk the consequences and use this."

She raised the revolver, cocking it as she did so.

Ida started across the room as if to run away.

"No you don't!" snarled the criminal, "you won't pass that door alive."

She pulled the trigger.

Snap! went the hammer, but there was no report.

At that instant Ida was catching her cloak from the chair.

Next, she was aiming a revolver taken from the cloak at her enemy.

"Laura," she said, coolly, though her voice shook on account of the hard struggle she had been through, "if that gun was loaded I shouldn't have let you have a chance with your knife. This one is loaded in every chamber, and I am a dead shot!"

Laura's face suddenly turned ghastly white.

She seemed insane.

Again and again she cocked the empty revolver and pulled the trigger.

Every time it failed to go off she gasped and uttered low exclamations of impatience.

She seemed to think that the knife was in her way, and she thrust it under her arm, so that she could use both hands freely on the revolver.

"You won't dare to kill me!" she stammered, with an attempt at boldness.

"Won't I?" retorted the detective, moving steadily toward her. "Don't make such a fearful mistake as that, my girl."

Laura raised her head defiantly.

Her eyes flashed again, and in another instant she would have recovered her sense and tried the knife.

But that instant did not come.

Ida knew what she was about, and before the criminal had stopped trying to shoot with the empty revolver, she had caught her two hands and slipped the bracelets upon the wrists.

That was another of the Carter tricks, and this one succeeded.

"Ha!" gasped the fair criminal, staring in amazement at her hands.

Then she became furious again.

She strained at the bracelets, gritting her teeth and panting with the exertion.

Ida simply drew the chain tight and let her struggle.

At last drops of blood oozed out upon Laura's wrists.

She had forced the steel bands through her skin, but she was so excited that she did not feel the pain.

The sight of the blood brought her frenzy to a sudden end, and she sank into a chair and sobbed.

"You made a good fight of it," said Ida, in a kindly tone. "I never had trouble with any one who did better. If you had held on to your knife, you might have got me; but I let you pick up the empty revolver so that I could have a chance to get one that would do the business. I am sorry for you, Laura."

Laura made no reply in words. Her strength seemed to have left her, and she cried like a child.

The detective took the dagger, that had fallen to the floor, and put it in a safe place.

Then, keeping her revolver where it could be used if necessary, she pinned up the rent in her clothing, and slowly put on her long cloak.

After that, she sat down for a few minutes to wait until Laura should be more calm.

At last she said:

"It is bound to be like this with your lover, Laura, sooner or later."

The girl stopped crying and looked at her inquiringly.

"He will be captured," added Ida.

"Not he!" returned Laura. "He's too smart for you. I am a fool, and so you get the best of me."

"I don't call you a fool, but I think you are very unwise. You cannot escape justice. Neither can Lan Stetson."

For a moment Laura stared at the detective, and, as she stared, the expression on her face hardened.

"I know what you're driving at," she said. "You hope to persuade me to give information about Lan. You won't get it. Never! And you won't get him, either. Never, I tell you; never!"

"Very well," responded Ira, rising, "we won't talk about it. Come."

"Where?"

"To the station."

The girl seemed to have forgotten for the moment what her situation was.

"To the station?" she echoed, blankly.

Then she looked at her hands and bit her lips.

"All right," she said, carelessly; "get a move on."

CHAPTER 177.

IDA AMONG THE CROOKS.

Laura gave no trouble on the way to the station.

They left the house so quietly that no one in it was aroused, and when they were outside they linked arms as if they were the best of friends.

Ida fixed her prisoner's jacket so that it covered her wrists, and the few persons they met did not notice that one of the girls was handcuffed.

While they were on the way, Ida asked one question:

"Did Lan know that you were coming back to the house?"

"No. He wouldn't have let me take the risk."

The detective believed that this was the truth, and said no more about it.

There was no scene of importance at the station. Laura had recovered her cool manner, and when the examination was over, and Ida was starting away, the prisoner called mockingly:

"Bye-bye, girly!"

"She's a hard case," thought Ida, "and probably she really believes that her lover will never be taken. Well, she doesn't know Nick Carter."

She went back to her room, and finished what she was beginning when Laura came in.

At about half-past twelve she again left the house, and this time she would have been taken for a boy.

Her clothes were old, and she had made up her beautiful face so that she looked like a young tough.

Among the things she had brought with her to Boston was a watch with a gold chain.

She did not know when she left New York that she would have any use for it, but, like her boy's costume, she took it so that she might be prepared for anything that might happen.

The watch was in her pocket now.

Half-an-hour after starting she was in North street.

In spite of the late hour and the cold weather there were loafers in the doorways, and quite a number of men walking one way or the other.

Many of them were sailors, others were ordinary

toughs, and among them all she was pretty certain that there was more than one professional crook.

Ida did not go at once to the building which Laura Dash had entered.

Laura had declared that her fence was not there, but Ida knew well enough that the girl lied.

She had gone in with her supposed stolen goods and she had come out without them, and that settled it, for she had undoubtedly lied also in saying that she knew she was being followed.

The detective waited because she knew too much about fences to go in without an invitation unless she had to.

She hoped that good luck or shrewdness, or both combined, would bring her in the way of some crook with whom she could make friends, and so be led to the place.

The men detectives had worked that scheme more than once.

So she went by the place, and was not at all discouraged when she saw that the building was wholly dark.

"I should fear I might be mistaken," she thought, "if the place was lighted up like an honest house."

A little further on her attention was attracted by loud cries, and she saw some men running.

There was a bend in the street just in front.

Ida hurried around it, and saw three men fighting furiously.

Two of them were evidently trying to knock out the other, who was striking wild, but so rapidly that they didn't make much progress against him.

A crowd was gathering around, and Ida joined it.

She noticed that the one man was well dressed, while the other two were rough and villainous-looking.

It was not hard to guess that the two had picked on the other for the purpose of robbing him.

Apparently he was half-drunk.

"He'd be a heavy hitter if he wasn't soaked, wouldn't he?" said Ida to a young fellow who stood beside her.

The young fellow gave her a curious glance, and replied:

"Dunno. Mebbe he couldn't fight at all if he hadn't got a jag on."

Ida had sized this fellow up for a crook, and she hoped to get acquainted with him.

Before she could make any other remark, the

drunken man got a hard blow on the chest that knocked his wind out and caused him to stagger until he fell full length.

And at that instant there was a warning cry:

"Cheese it! de cop!"

Most of the crowd scattered hurriedly, among the first to run being the young fellow to whom Ida had spoken.

The two who had been fighting the drunken man ran away also.

Those who stayed stepped over to the other side of the street.

A policeman came running around the bend.

The drunken man, who had not been badly hurt, was sitting up and looking around.

"Here!" cried the policeman, "what's going on?"

"I am," returned the drunk, thickly. "I've cleaned out the street—hic—and I'll clean out the next crowd—hic!—that has anything to say. Come on!"

He got to his feet and began to spar at a lamp-post.

"Huh!" said the policeman, "you're a fine come-on, you are. I'll take you in."

With that he caught the drunk by the arm and dragged him off toward the station.

The men who were looking on laughed quietly.

"That's the way it is sometimes," thought Ida; "the copper comes up just in time to lock up the victim, while the real guilty ones escape."

She strolled around for a few minutes, looking for the young fellow to whom she had spoken, and found him at last in a doorway.

"Hello," said he, when she stopped in front of him, "did the cop get those two?"

"No," replied Ida, "they chased themselves away just in time."

"Huh! has the cop gone?"

"Yes, he pulled in the swell."

"Huh!"

He looked up and down the street cautiously.

"Say," said Ida, "I'm new here. Can't you put me onto some joint where I can shove up a ticker?"

"Soak it?"

"No, sell it, you understand."

He looked at her sharply.

"Where'd you get the ticker?" he asked.

"I wouldn't tell that to me best friend."

"Oh! that's it, eh. Well, you go down the street

to number," here he mentioned a number, "and waltz right in. They'll give you cash for it."

"Come along with me, will yer?"

"Naw! I've got troubles of me own."

He left the doorway then, and started up the street in the direction opposite to that that he told her to take.

"All right," called Ida, "much obliged."

She started toward the number he spoke of, not because she had any idea of going in, but for the purpose of making him believe that she was in earnest.

He made no response.

A short walk brought the detective to the number mentioned.

At a glance she saw it was a sailors' lodging-house, one of the kind that is run by charitable people.

A room on the ground floor was lighted, and there were two signs in the window.

One read: "The Door Is Never Locked." The other made known that religious services were held there at a certain hour every day.

"So!" thought Ida, "he was kidding me. This would be a nice place to offer a stolen watch for sale. I think I shall have to give up trying to get friendly with a crook, and brace that fence all by myself.

"I'm not going to back out now, and I won't waste any more time about it."

She went to the building she had seen Laura Dash enter.

Few persons happened to be on the street at this time, and no one was near when she paused at the door.

The detective passed only long enough to turn the knob.

The door was not locked, and she went quickly in.

Closing the door behind her, she found herself in total darkness.

During the moment when it was open she had seen that there was a hallway here running toward the back of the building.

Ida went along the hall until she came to the end, where she felt for a door, but without finding one.

Then she looked around toward the front again, wondering whether she would have to go up or downstairs, and where the stairs were?

As she looked, she saw a faint gleam of light on the floor. It was like a thin line of yellow color, and she knew that it must come from under a door.

She felt her way to that spot, found there was a door there, and turned the knob.

This door was locked, but before she had time to decide as to what she should do next, the lock clicked, and the door was thrown suddenly open.

A man stood before her holding the door partly open with one hand.

She could not see his face clearly because the light was behind him and faint at that.

"What do you want?" he demanded, roughly.

"Oh!" said Ida, at once, putting on a swaggering tone, "this here's the joint, is it? I want to come in and do business, see?"

"There's nothing doing," returned the man, starting to shut the door in her face.

"Aw, say!" she protested, "give a feller a chancet, well ye?"

A voice from within the room said:

"Better let him in, Dave, if he's got this far, and see what he wants."

"All right, I don't care, but I never seen him before," replied Dave, and he stood aside.

Ida stepped into a room in which she saw at a glance that there were nine men.

It was a rather large room, very plainly furnished.

Four of the men were playing cards at a table. Others were in chairs, tipped back against the wall, smoking.

A tougher set of men she had never seen before in one place, not even in the prisoners' pen at a police court.

The card players were too interested in their game to do more than glance curiously at her as she entered, but those in the chairs kept their eyes on her.

One in particular, the most horrible-looking villain she had ever seen, stared at her in such a way that she almost shuddered.

"Does he see through my disguise?" she wondered; "does he know that I am a woman?"

"This looks as if it might be more than I had bargained for, but I'll see it through."

CHAPTER 178.

THE SECOND-STORY THIEF.

One man in the lot recognized her, and she recognized him.

It was the young tough with whom she had tried to get acquainted.

"Hullo, kid!" said he, in a tone of surprise.

"Hullo, kiddie," she responded; "had me on a string, didn't ye?"

Before he could make any retort a man spoke, and Ida recognized the voice as that of the man who had given orders that she be admitted.

"Do you know him, Dan?" he asked.

"No," replied the young tough, "I just met him outside, that's all."

The one who seemed to be the leader addressed Ida. He had not left his chair, and, in fact, nobody had stirred.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I'm up against it," Ida answered. "Hain't got a red, but I struck a soft graft this afternoon, and I'd like to run it into dosh."

"This isn't a pawnshop."

"Don't tell me that. I knowed that when I came in."

"Well, kid, what do you think it is?"

"Some people might call it a fence."

"Oh, no! this is a missionary society."

The men around the room laughed.

"We are members of the committee for giving help to reformed jail birds," added the leader, pleased with his own joke.

There were more chuckles.

"G'wan," said Ida, "I'm no chicken if I ain't got whiskers."

"No," said the man, more seriously, "I can see that. You've got nerve or you wouldn't have come in here. But the fact is, kid, there's nobody here who can help you. There's nothing at all doing, as Dave said."

At this moment there was the sound of a door opening and closing, and rapid steps along the hallway.

"Ah!" added the man, "there's the boss. You ought not to be here, kid, but there's no way to get out now. Better stay quietly, and perhaps the boss will fix you out."

The card players stopped their game suddenly, and every man in the room sat up straight.

There was one exception. The villainous fellow whose stare had so nearly upset the detective still sat with his back against the wall, looking as if he didn't care what happened.

The door opened, and a man walked rapidly in with a keen glance around as he crossed the room.

He was well dressed, and his face, though crafty, was more like that of a gentleman than a criminal.

"Ha!" said he, "two strangers."

"That one is all right," explained the man who had been speaking to Ida. "He's an expert second-story operator. The kid wandered in here to drop something."

The boss glanced at the second-story thief, nodded as if the sight satisfied him, and turned to Ida.

"What are you here for?" he demanded, sharply.

"I'm here for this," she responded, taking out her old watch and chain, "'cause I don't want to go anywhere else for it, see? I want to turn it into boodle and fergit it."

The boss took the watch in his hand, looked at it a moment, and asked:

"How did you happen to come here?"

"'Cause I was told it was the right sort of place."

"Who told you?"

"Laura Dash."

Ida had foreseen this question, and had made up her mind how she would answer it.

The boss started slightly and looked at her sharply.

She saw that other men in the room were interested at the mention of that name.

Then the boss smiled, and it was a smile of such villainous satisfaction that Ida was instantly suspicious and on her guard.

"Boys," said he, "Laura Dash was pulled in less than two hours ago by the detective who had been spying on our friend Lan. Who this kid is, I don't pretend to know, but I do know that Laura never sent him here. Put a string around him, and we'll attend to him after I've got the rest of the night's business out of the way."

Dave and another man immediately stepped toward Ida.

One of them drew a strong cord from his pocket, and the other took out a gag.

"It's now or never," thought Ida, quickly. "If I want to get out of here alive, it's got to be done now."

She stepped quickly back a pace and flashed her revolver in the face of the astonished Dave.

"Halt!" she cried in a clear, determined voice; "another step, and I'll fire!"

Both men drew back, greatly startled.

Taking advantage of this, Ida leaped toward the door.

She had half crossed the room before the ruffians recovered from their surprise.

"Stop him!" cried the boss.

Two of the card players who were nearest jumped at her.

She swung her revolver arm about, and fired full in the fellow's face.

He staggered back, howling, with an ugly but not dangerous wound.

Ida gained a step by this, but she could not look all ways at once, and she found herself seized from behind.

Strong hands forced her back to that part of the room from which she had started.

It was the villainous second-story thief who had done it, and everybody else in the room was coming at her.

She tried to shoot the man who grabbed her, but for a moment she could not free her arm.

He did not seem to think of taking her weapon away, but he held her for an instant, or until Dave rushed close and aimed a fearful blow at her with his fist.

Then the second-story thief pushed her aside suddenly.

Dave's blow missed, and, as he went stumbling past, the second-story thief brought him a swinging side blow that dropped him in a heap.

Next instant two other ruffians attacked Ida. She was just getting her balance, and would have fired at them but that before she could raise her weapon the second-story thief sailed into them with straight-arm blows that seemed to make their bones crack when they landed.

The confusion was so great that half the men in the room did not realize yet that the second-story thief was taking Ida's part.

They rushed into the fight, but the thief suddenly showed a gleaming revolver in each hand.

"Back!" he shouted, in a terrible voice; "back, every infernal one of you! It's sure death to stir!"

Then Ida understood.

This horrible-looking villain, who had been described as a second-story thief, was her comrade, Chick!

The ruffians paused for an instant, too startled to stir.

Then one made a break for a side door.

It opened upon one of the alleys that Ida had seen in the daytime.

In fact, it was the very door out of which Laura Dash had come so unexpectedly.

Chick let the man get half through the door, and then fired.

The bullet took him in the shoulder, and he went staggering and groaning across the alley.

Another man, who had started to make his escape in the same way, was brought down by Ida with a bullet in his arm.

"You can have all you want, if you like the taste," said Chick, with stern calmness. "I'm not particular whether the police find you dead or alive when they come."

The shots, the groans of the wounded men, and the sight of the two detectives standing with revolvers smoking and raised to fire again, awed the ruffians.

They stood like statues, the boss particularly being motionless and pale as marble.

It was only for a few seconds.

The noise of shots had alarmed the police in the neighborhood.

That was the reason why Chick had allowed one of the gang to get the door open.

He knew that the shot would be heard further, and it proved that the presence of the wounded man in the alley guided the first policeman to the spot.

"What the——"

"We are Carter detectives," interrupted Chick, "and we can hold this crowd as long as you please, but you'd better run back and send a call for a patrol wagon."

This was done, and, before the wagon came, other policemen ran up and helped the detectives put all the criminals in irons.

Not one escaped.

Chick hardly spoke to Ida until the last of the gang had been examined and locked up at the police station.

"That was a pleasant party, Ida," he said, then, "but I guess it was lucky for you that I happened to be there."

"Indeed it was," she answered, "but I thought sure I was done for when you grabbed me and pulled me back."

"Didn't you know who I was?"

"I should say not!"

"I knew you the instant you came in, and I tried to give you a look that you would understand."

"Dear me! that look almost scared me, Chick. I never saw you look so horribly."

"Thank you."

"Didn't I do right in trying to break away as I did?"

"Exactly, Ida. I pulled you back for two reasons. In the first place, I saw that a couple of the ruffians would head you off at the door. They had sling shots, and one of them would have managed to give you a soaker. In the next place, by pulling you back, I made them believe that I was fighting for them, and got them to come toward me. That gave me my chance to knock them out before they knew where they were at."

Ida laughed quietly.

"And I was trying to shoot you," she said.

CHAPTER 179.

PATSY'S DREAM.

"I know it," said Chick, "and I really think it was a closer call for me than it was for you. If I hadn't used you pretty rough, you would have put a bullet into me. But I understand, from what the boss said, that you've arrested Laura Dash."

"Yes; didn't you get my telegram?"

"No; I haven't been anywhere where you could reach me for the past twenty-four hours. Tell me about it."

They were on their way in a cab to Ida's boarding-house. She told him about the escape of Stetson and the return of Laura.

"Well," he said, "it isn't likely that Stetson will try to stay in the city any longer. We think he will go northward, and, if he does, Nick or Patsy is pretty sure to catch him."

"How did the boss know that Laura had been taken?"

"By watching the police station. He probably knew that she was going to attack you, and waited near the station to learn the result. He's the head of the gang, of which Stetson is only a member. Patsy's theory of this matter has proved to be correct. I got onto the facts in Salem."

"How, Chick?"

"I arrested one of Stetson's accomplices up there.

His name is Lambert. I was pretty certain that I should get a confession from him, and I succeeded.

"Lambert's part in the scheme was to receive stolen goods for Stetson and some others who worked up that way, and hold it until there was a chance to ship it to the fence in North street that we broke up to-night.

"He told me all about it. The fence is run by the man they call the boss. He is supposed to be a respectable merchant here in Boston, and he goes under the name of Hawley. I doubt whether that's his real name, but it doesn't matter. His real business is the management of thieves.

"For the past twenty-four hours I have been playing thief and getting evidence against Hawley.

"I hadn't seen the man until to-night, and I was in the joint waiting for him.

"My plan was to get a good look at him, see how he did business, then make an excuse to get out and bring around a squad of police before the gang broke up for the night.

"As soon as you came in, I knew I should have to change my scheme."

"I hope my coming didn't spoil your plan," said Ida.

"Not a bit. It brought things to a head a little faster, that was all. I've got all the evidence we need, and I think we can say that everybody in the gang is now under arrest, except Stetson."

"I hope Nick catches him."

"So do I, and, as there's nothing I can do about it to-night, I shall go to a hotel and get some of the sleep I've been losing. In the morning I'll join Nick."

They were now at the Dover street boarding-house, and they said "good-night" there.

As indicated before, Nick and Patsy had been exploring the country lying to the north of Boston, because it was there that Stetson had committed the daring crimes that had attracted Nick's attention to him in the first place.

They had found many traces of him. Nick, for instance, had come upon a roadside tavern, where Stetson had spent several days, immediately after a bold robbery near by.

The landlord of the tavern had no idea that the man who stayed with him was a criminal.

That was Stetson's way of doing things.

He stayed openly near the scenes of his opera-

tions, and there was one time when he pretended to help the police hunt for himself.

Another time, when he had been hard pressed by the police, Stetson had stayed for a week at a farm, doing odd jobs about the place for his board and lodging.

He didn't go away until the police had scoured that neighborhood and given up the chase.

It caused Nick and Patsy a great deal of trouble to find out these things, but everything they learned convinced them that the place to look for the criminal was in the country that he was familiar with.

They felt certain that, so soon as he believed that the pursuit had been dropped, he would break loose somewhere north of Boston.

So they kept their own movements very quiet, and nobody knew that they were on the hunt, except a few high officers of the Boston police force.

Patsy's part of the hunt had been to start in near Newburyport, where Stetson had been captured, and zig-zag across the county, working steadily toward the south.

Nick had begun his operations nearer Boston.

On the morning after Ida's adventures, they met in Arlington, a few miles north of the city.

Patsy had been on the tramp all night. In fact, he had had almost no sleep for several days.

"Well?" said Nick, when he saw the young man.

Patsy held up both hands, palms downward.

"Nothing, eh?" Nick added.

"Nothing new," replied Patsy. "He's the most slippery customer I ever tackled."

"I should say so! Think of having our hands on him for more than a week!"

"What do you mean, Nick?"

"Why! Ida—but you haven't heard from her, I suppose?"

"No."

"That's so. You haven't been where her telegram would reach you. Well, I got this at three o'clock this morning."

He handed Ida's telegram to Patsy.

It was the one which told briefly of Stetson's escape.

Patsy shrugged his shoulders and handed it back.

"It's no fault of Ida's," said Nick. "It simply shows what a sharp crook we have to deal with. The mail has just brought me this letter."

He then gave Patsy the letter that Ida had written before her encounter with Laura.

When he had read it, it was Patsy's turn to say: "Well?"

"I've been on the watch ever since," said Nick, "but nothing has happened. I'm sure he couldn't get out of Boston by rail, for every train is watched by central office men. He's got to go by carriage road, and, knowing as much about him as we do, I feel that the road leading through this village is the one he is most likely to take."

"I'd bank on that," responded Patsy; "but isn't it probable that he's got beyond this point already?"

"Do you think he'd get by me?"

"Not if he came this way. He may have taken some other road."

"Of course, but I'm going to watch here for a while. The thing for you to do, Patsy, is to get sleep. You look as if you were just about at the end of your rope."

"Oh, no!" cried the young man, trying to look fresh. "As long as there's anything to be done, I can keep awake."

"I believe that, but there's nothing to be done, my boy; that is, nothing for two of us. You go into the hotel there and get a room. I'll call you after two or three hours, or sooner, if there's any need, and when you get up you'll be worth four times as much as you are now."

"I guess you're right, Nick. I presume a kid could do me now, if there was a fight."

Patsy went into the hotel and was shown to a room that overlooked the street.

It was always his habit to sleep with a window open, and so, although it was winter, he opened a window before he lay down.

Nick remained on the street for the purpose of watching the trolley cars that passed there on their way from Boston.

There was a shop for the sale and repair of automobiles next to the hotel, and at this time a machine had been stopped before the door to have a punctured tire plugged.

As usual under such circumstances, a number of men and boys gathered around and watched the work.

Nick looked on also—not because he was interested, but in order to keep from attracting attention to himself.

A few minutes after Patsy went into the hotel, another automobile came up.

It was going at high speed when first seen, and the villagers supposed that it was going to pass, but the single passenger shut off the power when he saw the shop.

He brought the machine to a standstill by the side of the road near the shop door.

"Gee!" exclaimed one of the bystanders, "that machine is a flyer, ain't it?"

"Built for speed," remarked another.

"Wonder who 'tis?"

There were various guesses, the names of several rich Boston men being mentioned, but nobody could be sure who the driver of the machine was, for he had on a cap with a vizor that covered the upper part of his face; his eyes were concealed by big goggles, and there was a muffler over his mouth.

In other words, he was rigged out like the regulation chauffeur, as the drivers of automobiles are called nowadays.

"Got any gasoline?" he called to the man who was working over the punctured tire.

"Yep," replied the workman, without looking up.

"I want my tank filled."

"All right; in a minute or two."

"I'm in a hurry."

"First come, first served."

"But I've got a long run to make to-day."

Here the owner of the first automobile spoke:

"I'm in no great hurry," he said. "You can stop this work long enough to fill his tank."

"All right," replied the workman, getting up and going into his shop.

"Get a move on!" called the chauffeur.

The workman was hurrying. He was already at the door with a can of gasoline.

In a few seconds the tank was filled.

The chauffeur paid his charge, turned on the lever, and his swift machine went chuff-chuffing up the road.

About half-a-minute after he had disappeared, Patsy came running from the hotel.

He was not wholly dressed, but was putting on his coat as he ran.

His eyes were wild and excited.

"Nick!" he said, in a husky tone, "didn't you get him?"

"Get him?" echoed Nick, "what's the matter?"

Patsy looked around as if he was only half awake.

"I fell asleep the instant I lay down," he muttered.

"Of course you did. We all do. What did you wake so soon for? I haven't called you."

"No, but somebody did."

"Eh?"

"I mean, I thought I heard a voice. I suppose I must have dreamed it."

Patsy was again looking around inquiringly.

"See here!" cried Nick, suddenly; "what did you dream?"

"I can't remember, but I heard a voice and tried to get up. I can only remember one thing the voice said."

"What was it?"

"The voice said: 'Get a move on.'"

"Well, there was a man here just now who said that."

"There was?"

Patsy clutched Nick by the arm.

The young man was wide awake now, but more excited than before.

"Where has he gone?" he whispered.

"Up the road in an automobile."

"Nick, I knew that voice! I know I am right. The man who said 'Get a move on' was Lan Stetson!"

CHAPTER 180.

A ROAD BACK TO DEATH.

Nick said nothing at once.

His jaws came together with a sharp snap and his eyes glowed fiercely.

"The scoundrel has slipped out of our grasp again!" groaned Patsy.

"No, he hasn't," retorted Nick, then. "I'll have him this time, or give up the business!"

He dashed into the automobile shop.

"Which is your swiftest machine?" he asked.

"That one," said the dealer, pointing.

Nick gave it a hasty examination.

"It's a good one," he said. "Is it ready for use?"

"Oh, yes."

"I must have it."

"You want to hire it?"

"I'm not particular——"

"We don't loan valuable machines like that unless we know the party——"

"What's your price for it?"

"Twelve hundred dollars."

In a twinkling Nick's wallet was in his hand, and he was counting out some large bills.

"Got all you need?" asked Patsy, bringing out his own roll.

"Yes."

He handed the amount to the astonished dealer.

"Rush that machine into the road," ordered Nick.

"Yes, sir."

The dealer was beginning to write a receipt for the money.

"Hang the bill of sale!" cried Nick. "Get that machine out where I can use it."

The dealer stuffed the bills into his pocket, and ran around to the machine.

"Better have it inspected, sir," he suggested.

"Inspected! You said it was in working order."

"So it is, but we usually give a machine a looking over before it leaves the shop."

"I'll chance it."

"Very well, sir."

"Plenty of gasoline aboard?"

"The tank is full, sir."

"Out with it, then!"

Nick and Patsy had laid hold, and, with the dealer, they ran the machine into the road.

"You go back to bed, Patsy," said Nick. "I'd like to take you along, but I am afraid the extra weight would keep me back. He must be two miles ahead of me already."

Patsy was disappointed, but he knew that Nick was right.

If there was any chance of overtaking the flying criminal it was in giving the machine nothing unnecessary to do.

So the young detective returned to the hotel.

Nick's start was slow, for it took some time for the machine to get up full steam.

Before he had got well to going it was probable that Stetson had gained on him another mile.

"If he's really going to try for a long run to-day," thought Nick, remembering what the chauffeur had said when he asked for gasoline, "and if he is sensible, he won't push too hard, and that will give me a chance to come up with him. I wonder how fast this thing can go?"

He was not long in getting beyond the village.

The roadway had been cleared of snow most of the way, but there were low drifts alongside.

The detective had noticed that there was a cyclometer on the machine, and when he saw a long, straight stretch ahead, he took out his watch and timed a mile.

It was not a cold day for winter, but the rush of air was icy on his unprotected face.

The tears came into his eyes so that he seemed to be looking through a mist.

He pulled his hat down low on his forehead to protect his eyes as much as possible, but at that he suffered severely.

Only those who have tried running an auto at high speed can understand how necessary the big goggles and mufflers are that the regular chauffeurs use.

"If it was anything but the catching of that daring villain," thought Nick, "I wouldn't stand it."

He was quite familiar with the running of the machine, for he had made some study of it.

That was the way he did with every new invention.

He wanted to be ready to make use of anything that might help him in his business.

So, when the famous Frenchman, Fournier, was in this country, Nick quietly took some lessons of him.

Fournier has won most of the automobile races here and in Europe since the machine was invented, and from him Nick learned all that was necessary for getting the highest possible speed out of the auto he was now traveling in.

There was a curve in the road before he came to the end of his mile, and, as he swung around it, he saw another auto coming toward him.

"I wonder if Stetson has tried to double on his course?" he thought.

The other auto was fully half-a-mile away.

Nick glanced at his cyclometer and watch.

"Seventy-five seconds," he muttered. "That's doing pretty well for a start, but I must get it up to a mile a minute.

"It shows that the machine is a good one, anyway."

In a few seconds he could see that the coming auto was not the one in which he had seen the criminal.

Some distance back he had passed the beginning of a branch road.

Now he shut off power and held up his hand to the parties in the other machine.

They stopped beside him.

"I am an officer," said Nick, frankly, so as to get quick answers. "Have you met an auto with a single passenger?"

"Yes," they told him.

"Tall, with regulation cap and goggles?"

"Yes," they said, "on the turnpike about two miles back."

"Thank you."

The information was encouraging.

It showed that he was not losing. On the con-

trary, he seemed to be gaining. And it showed, also, that Stetson was not likely to turn off the main road.

The branch roads would be less clear of snow.

"If Stetson wanted to make speed, he would have to stick to the turnpike.

Nick got up speed again without delay.

Soon he passed through a village, but he did not stop to ask questions, for he was certain that his man was ahead.

Two or three miles further on he noticed curving wheel tracks in the snow at the side of the road.

"Looks as if he turned into the drifts," thought Nick. "I wonder why?"

A little further and Nick himself had to turn into the drift, for a wagon carrying a big load of hay was in the middle of the road.

Nick slowed down to pass around it.

"Seen another auto go by?" called Nick to the farmer who was driving.

"Yes, gol darn him!" was the angry reply. "He seemed to think he owned the highway."

"That was Stetson," thought Nick.

He pushed rapidly up a grade, and when he was at the top he found a straight stretch of road in front of him for more than a mile.

Away at the further end was a black speck that disappeared around a curve almost as soon as Nick saw it.

He shut his jaws together, and put on all the power possible.

Down the grade, faster and faster, till he could see nothing but two lines of white on each side, went the detective.

As he came near the curve, he could see nothing at all ahead, but there were the lines of white to guide him.

They were the drifts of snow along the roadside.

He was going so fast, more than a mile a minute now, that they seemed to be waving like clothes on a line.

Around the curve, taking his chances of an upset or a collision, and there was the speck again.

It was twice as large now, and he knew it to be the auto that carried Lan Stetson.

There was another straight stretch, level.

Stetson, unsuspecting the pursuit, was saving his machine.

Nick, therefore, gained rapidly.

The distance between the two had become no more than two hundred yards, when Stetson suddenly looked back.

No need to tell him anything!

Instantly he put on all the power he had, and there was a race in earnest.

Nick dashed the water from his eyes.

It gathered again quickly, but he kept rubbing it away, and saw that he was gaining.

Stetson, looking around again, saw the same thing.

Once more he tried to get more speed from his machine.

He bent over to make his body give the least possible resistance to the wind.

Then he must have become convinced that the pursuer had the faster machine, for he suddenly stood up and faced the detective with a drawn revolver.

"Shut off your power or you're a dead man!" he shouted.

Nick never stirred.

Stetson's machine was going as before, but he was not guiding it now, and suddenly it struck a lump of ice and snow.

It was a small lump, but it was just enough to turn the forward wheel a little.

The machine jolted, and Stetson, trying hastily to guide it, gave the steering bar too much of a turn.

As a result, the auto slewed about and began to tip over.

At that instant Nick was close behind, with revolver drawn, though determined not to use it, if he could help it.

Seeing that it was impossible to avoid a collision, Nick half rose, prepared to jump.

Crack! went the criminal's revolver.

It was a last desperate effort to kill his pursuer.

The bullet whistled by Nick's face, and at the same instant the machines collided, just as Nick had anticipated.

Both men went flying through the air.

As Nick was prepared for it, he shot clean over Stetson's machine, and landed in a drift, through which he slid for two rods or more.

He was somewhat shocked and winded, but he picked himself up quickly and ran back to Stetson.

The criminal had plunged into the drift also, but, not being prepared, he had not been able to save himself.

Instead of sliding through it safely, he went almost straight down, and his head struck a covered rock.

Stetson's skull was smashed in.

He was dead before Nick knelt beside him.

"Well," said Nick, thoughtfully to himself, "the hangman has lost a job, but we didn't need his evidence, so perhaps it's just as well to end this way as any other."

The automobiles were too badly damaged for further use at that time, but Nick hired a farmer to drag them to the nearest town, where they were put in order.

It proved that Stetson had stolen his machine from in front of a house on Commonwealth avenue at an early hour that morning.

The owner recovered it before the day was over, getting his information as to what had become of it by a telegram from Nick, who found his name on some articles in the auto.

This adventure ended the work of the detectives in that part of the country for a time, but it was only to let them work elsewhere.

THE END.

It was not long before the famous detectives were engaged upon another important case, an account of which will appear in next week's issue (No. 267), entitled: "Nick Carter's Ocean Chase; or, The Missing Crown Diamond."

FUN FOR EVERYBODY!

This is where all of the funniest stories sent in by the contestants in the prize contest appear. Here are some right off the bat just sent in. Read them, boys, and then send in your own.

This contest has become one of the most successful ever conducted. The entry list even now is simply enormous. This is the last week of it.

Look out for a New Contest next week!

Peter's Courtship.

(By R. P. Taylor, Oklahoma.)

Well, you see, me and Sal got along middlin' well for some time till I made up my mind to fetch things to a head, for I loved her harder and harder every day. And I had an idea that she had a sorter sneaking kindness for me, but how to dew the thing up right pestered me orful. I got some love books and red how fellers got down on their marrow bones and talked like parrots and the gals they would gently fall into the feller's arms, but, somehow, that way didn't suit my notion. I asked marm how dad courted her, but she said it had bin so long that she'd forgot all about it. (Uncle Joe allers says marm done all the courtin'.) At last I made up my mind to go it blind, for this thing was fairly consuming my innards. So I goes over to her daddy's, and when I got there I sot like a fool thinking how I should begin. Sal, she sed somethin' was a trublin' me, and sez she:

"Ain't you sick?"

"Yes—no," says I; "that is, I ain't exactly well, I thought I'd come over it to-night," sez I.

"That's a mighty purty beginnin', anyhow," thinks I; so I tried again.

"Sal," sez I, and about this time I felt mighty faint and uneasy.

"What?" sez Sal.

"Sal," sez I, again.

"What?" sez she.

"I'll get to it arter a while, at this luck," thinks I.

"Peter," sez she, "there's something a troublin' you powerful, I no. It's mity wroug for you tew keep it from a body for an innerd sorrer is a consuming fire."

She sed this, she did, the dear, sly creatur'. She noed what was the matter all the time mity well, and was just a trying to fish it out, but I was gone so far I didn't see the point. At last I kinder sorter gulped down the lump as was raising in my throat and sez I:

"Sal, does you love everybody?"

"Well," says she, "thar's dad and marm and (counting her fingers all the time with eyes sorter shut like a feller shooting off a gun), and thar's old Pide (that were an old cow of hern). I can't think of enybody else jist now," sez she.

Now, this was awful fur a feller deed in luv, so arter a while I tries another shute. Sez I: "Sal, I'm powerful lonesome to hum, and I sometimes think if I only had a putty little wife to love and to talk to and to move and have to live with, I should be a tremendous feller."

With that she begin and named all the gals within five miles of thare and never wunse cum a nigh namin'

of herself and sed I orter get one of them. That sorter got my dander up and so I hitched my cheer close to hern and shet my eyes and tremblously sed:

"Sal, you are the very gal I've been hankering after for a long time. I luv you all over from the sole of your head to the foot of your crown, an' I don't care who knows it, and if you say so we'll be joined together in the holy bons of matrimony e pluribus unum, world without end," sez I; and I felt like I'd thrown up an allygator, I felt so relieved. With that, she fetched a sorter scream, and she sez, sez she:

"Peter!"

"What is it, Sally?" sez I.

"Yes," sez she, a hidin' her purty face behind her hands. (You may depend upon it, I felt orful good.)

"Glory! glory!" sez I. "I must hollar, Sal, or I'll bust wide open. Hooray for hooray. I kin jump over a ten rale fence, can do everything that any feller could, would or orter do. With that I sorter sloshed myself down by her and clinched the bargain with a kiss—and such a kiss—talk about your sugar, talk about yer merlasses, talk about yer blackberry jam, you couldn't have got me to come nigh 'em; they would all a tasted sour arter that. If Sal's daddy hadn't hollered out: "It's time for all 'onest folks to be in bed," I do believe I'd stayed there all nite.

An Irish Letter.

(By John L. Holsinger, Pennsylvania.)

The following letter was written during the Rebellion by an Irish member of Parliament to his friend in London:

My Dear Sir: Having now a little peace and quietness, I sit down to inform you of the dreadful bustle and confusion we are in from these bloodthirsty rebels, most of whom are, I am glad to say, killed and dispersed. We are in a pretty mess, can get nothing to eat, nor wine to drink, except whisky, and when we sit down to dinner we are obliged to keep both hands armed. While I write this I hold a sword in each hand and a pistol in the other. I concluded from the beginning that this would be the end of it, and I see I was right, for it is not half over yet. At present there are such goings on that everything is at a standstill.

I should have answered your letter a fortnight ago, but I did not receive it until this morning. Indeed scarcely a mail arrives safe without being robbed. No longer ago than yesterday the coach with the mails from Dublin was robbed near this town; the bags had been

judiciously left behind for fear of accident, and by good luck there was nobody in it but two outside passengers, who had nothing for the thieves to take. Last Thursday notice was given that a gang of rebels was advancing here under the French standard, but they had no colors, or any drums except bagpipes. Immediately every man in the place, including women and children, ran out to meet them. We soon found our force much too little. We were far too near to think of retreating. Death was in every face, but to it we went, and by the time half our little party were killed, we began to be all alive again. Fortunately, the rebels had no guns, except pistols, cutlasses and pikes, and as we had plenty of muskets and ammunition we put them all to the sword. Not a soul of them escaped except some that were drowned in an adjacent bog, and, in a very short time nothing was to be heard but silence. Their uniforms were all different colors, but mostly green. After the action we went to rummage a sort of camp, which they had left behind them. All we found was a few pikes without heads, a parcel of empty bottles full of water, and a bundle of French commissions filled with Irish names. Troops are now stationed all around the country, which exactly square with my ideas. I have only time to add that I am in great haste.

Yours truly,

P. S. If you do not receive this, of course it must have been miscarried, therefore I beg you will write to let me know.

The Dutchman's Offer.

(By James Robin, Pennsylvania.)

A German in Chicago who has not paid much attention to learning English had a horse stolen from his barn the other night, whereupon he advertised as follows:

"Vone nite de oder day, ven I vas bin awake in my shleep I heare sometings vat I tinks vas not yust right in my parn, and I out shumps to bed and runs mit the parn out; and ven I vas dere coom I sees dat my pig iron gray mare he vas bin tide loose and run mit the shlaple away, and whoeffer will him back pring, I vill yust so much pay him as was him kushtomary."

The Country Circus.

(By George H. Latham, East Cambridge, Mass.)

Well, I've just arrived in the country. It's so nice to go down to the country and rusticate. I love the country. What a happy life is a farm life! Then, when the circus comes around, O what fun! I'll never forget the first time I went to the circus. I saved up twenty-five cents and took my girl. I think it was Adam Foreclaw's circus. We went to the snide show first, where they have all curiosities. Then we went in the "imaginary," where they keep all the animals. They had a "re-ner-ker-see rus," and a "hit em-with-a-tomatus," and a "pork-and-beans," and a "rang-a-tang," and some kind of a cat—it must have been a "pole cat," 'cause a man kept pushing him around with a pole all the time.

But the funnest animals of all was a big rubber fellow

with tew tails. I asked a man what it was, and he said it was an "elegant." Then I asked him if all elegents had two tails. He got mad and said:

"You darn fool, that ain't two tails. That big one in front is his trunk."

I laughed, and he laughed, and my girl laughed, and I said:

"Well, if that big snapper in front is his trunk, the little snapper behind must be his valise." Then the show started and the fellow with the painted face sang a song.

He Knew Her.

(By Sterling Widener, South Carolina.)

A young man living in town was visited by his aunt and uncle from the country. One morning his uncle went with him to his office, and while there the young man had occasion to use the telephone which was connected with his residence. Now, his uncle, who had never saw one before, was curious to know what it was, so the young man calling up his wife at home told her to send Aunt Mariah to the 'phone; then telling his uncle to put the receiver to his ear, told him to call his wife's name, and that she would hear him and answer him. The old man, thinking that there was some trick, was reluctant to do it, but after prevailing with him a while the young man finally got him to consent to go to the 'phone. Picking up the receiver he placed it to his ear and bawled out:

"Mariah!" when about that time lightning struck the wire and knocked the old man down. Picking himself up, the old man limped over to where his nephew was standing, he exclaimed, "That was her all right!"

A Promising Lot.

(By James Hanly, Illinois.)

The Big Lie Club has opened a branch at Chicago, and on Friday last thirty-five persons presented themselves for enrollment. The chairman pointed out that each one would be required to say something which would justify his being enrolled a member.

Said applicant number one:

"I know a man who is so tall he has to mount a forty-rung ladder to shave himself."

"I know a woman," said the next would-be member, "who is so thin it takes three of her to make a shadow."

"I caught a piece of cheese running my dog all around the house this morning," said a third.

"I know a nigger," began a fourth, "who is so white that——"

"Stop!" cried the chairman, "you are all enrolled."

How He Got Even.

(By Le R. Nelson, Ohio.)

A certain tax assessor of a district in Chicago was walking peacefully along Neil street (a part of his district) when a goat rushed out of a near-by alley and attacked him. After butting him around for a while the goat walked leisurely away leaving the assessor in a rather comical position. He gathered himself up,

brushed the dust off his clothes, and started again for his destination, thinking of some plan to get even with the owner of the goat.

During the next assessment, as he was assessing the tax on the goods of the owner of the goat, he taxed the man eight dollars for the goat.

"Eight dollars," exclaimed the astonished man. "Why, I only paid five for him. Read me the law."

Taking a large book from under his arm, the assessor read the following:

"Any man owning property a-butting on Neil street will be taxed four dollars a foot, four feet eight dollars."

Effective Medicine.

(By Clifford Crouch, Norwich, Conn.)

Once there were two Hebrew doctors. Their names were Isaacstein and Goldsmith. They had just started out in business to sell their patent medicines, which were Electric Oil and a Healing Compound.

They started in different directions, but a year later met at the same hotel.

"Vell, how vas your medicine selling?" asked Dr. Isaacstein.

"Vell," said Dr. Goldsmith, "I have sold a goot many bottles, and have some pretty goot testimonyals."

Then, taking from his pocket he read as follows:

Dear Sir: A year ago I was run over by a train and had both legs cut off. I at once began taking your Healing Compound and they grew on again.

Yours truly, Dan Smith.

"Vell, dot is noding, just come up to my room. I vill show you sometings dat vill make your eyes stick out," said Isaacstein.

They went upstairs, and Isaacstein produced a paper and read as follows:

Dear Sir: I was born without liver or lights, but at once took your Electric Oil. I took ten bottles and now my liver weighs 24 pounds, and I have electric lights.

Yours truly, John Smith.

Hans Schmidt's Mistake.

(By Roy Newcomer, Illinois.)

I keep me von leetle schtore town Broadway, und does a pooty good peesnis, but I ton't got mooch gabital to vork mit, so I finds id hard vork to get me all der credits I vould like. Last veek I hear about some goots dot a larty vas going to sell pooty sheap, und so I writes dot man if he vould gief me der refusal of dose goots for a couple of days. He gave me der refusal—dot is, he said I couldn't haf dem—but he said he vould gall on me and see mine schtore, und den if mine schtanding in peesnis vas goot, perhaps ve might do sometings togedder. Vell, I vas behind mine gounter yesterday, ven a shentleman comes in und dakes me py der hant und say: "Mr. Schmidt, I believe."

I says, "Yaw," und den I dinks to mineseelf, dis vas der man vot has dose goots to sell, und I must dry to make some goot imbressions mit him, so ve Gould do some peesness. "Dis vas goot schtore," he says, looking roundt, "but you don't got a pooty pig schtock already." I vas avraid to let him know dot I only hat

'bout a tousand tollars vort of goods in de place, so I says: "You ton't vould tink I hat more as dree tousand dollars in dis leetle schtore, ain't it?" He says: "You ton't tole me! Vos dot bossible!" I says, "Yaw."

"Vell," says der shentleman, "I dinks you ought to know petter as anybody else vot you have." Und den he takes a pig book und says, "Vell, I poots you town for dree tousand dollars." I ask him vot he means py "poots me down," und den he says he vos an assessor of broperty, und he tank me so kindly, pecause he says I vas sooch an honest Deutcher, und didn't dry und sheat der gofermants. I dells you I didn't veel any petter as a hundred ter cent. ven he valks oudt of the schtore, und der next time I makes free mit strangers I vinds first deir peesnis oudt.

Wanted Water Next Time.

(By M. La Verne, Corbin, Michigan.)

A teacher in a Dallas County (Texas) public school has received the following letter:

"Sir: Will you in the future give my son easier somes to do at nites? This is what he's brought hoam to or three nites back: 'If fore gallons of beer will fill thirty too pint bottles, how many pint and a half bottles will a gallin of bere fil?'"

"Well, we tried and could make nothin' of it, at all, at all, and my boy cried and said he'd get licket; so I had to by a nine gallin keg of bere, which was against my religion, as well as my pocketbook, and he went down cellar and got sum bere and brandy bottles; we filled them, and my boy put the number down for an answer. I don't no whether it is write or knot, as we spilt sum of the bere, while doing it.

"P. S.—Please let the next some be in water, as I am not able to buy more bere."

A Modern Fable.

(By Guy C. Thompson, Indiana.)

Once upon a time a Spring Lamb strayed far from the Shepherd's precinct, and becoming Weary, he stopped at a Babbling Brook to refresh his Interior Department.

Now, it happened to Happen that an old Gray Wolf was treating himself to a Drink just below at the same B. B., and observing the Lamb in the water he called out, angrily:

"Say, you! Remove your Pedal Extremities from that Aqua Pura. Can't you see you are riling the Mud and thus making the liquid unpalatable?"

"Go to, you old Growler!" retorted the Lamb. "If the Riled water Riles you, suppose you go and chase yourself. See?"

"You will see what I see," replied the Wolf, who was fond of Lamb with Sauce, whereupon he Started in to make Mincemeat of the Innocent. But scarcely had he begun the Job when, Lo and Behold, his teeth broke short off and he was compelled to Sneak away in Disgust, and the Lamb trotted back to his mother, where, after shedding a few Prodigal tears, he lived happily ever after.

Moral: Before tackling Spring Lamb arm yourself with an ax and saw.

Stamp and Coin Department.

Each week, in this department, you will find special articles about stamps and coins. We also give an opportunity to our readers to make exchanges of coins, as well as stamps, through this department free of cost, and we will answer, in a special column, any questions our readers would like to ask on these subjects. Address all communications to the "Stamp and Coin Department."

Hints to Coin Collectors.

Coins have interested mankind from their first inception to the present date, and as their numbers have increased there has been a certain quantity laid away and forgotten for one reason or another, only to be found years later when, perhaps, their value has increased enormously; unfortunately, there is no established rule by which their value can be determined by those who are not in the business, because the commercial price of a coin depends upon a number of circumstances, the principal factor being the quantity originally coined and the number of amateurs engaged in forming sets of the series to which it belongs. For instance, a 1793 half cent is very much rarer than a cent of the same date, but will not sell for as high a price because there are comparatively few collectors of half cents. Then as to date, the 1798 is one of the commonest of the old series of cents, while the next date, 1799, is the rarest. Again, we pay 50 cents for an 1873 silver 3 cent piece, and sell genuine Roman coins, 2,000 years old, for 10 cents. Then, the condition of a coin has a great deal to do with its value; all old coins, in perfect condition, have some value, but by perfect condition we mean exactly as it came from the mint, a coin on which you can read every word plainly may not even be in what we call good condition.

United States Coins.

The series of silver coinage was commenced by the U. S. mint the year following the regular copper issue, the dollars being first struck in 1794, and continued up to 1804, from which date to 1836 no coins of this denomination were issued by the U. S. mint.

The first cent struck at the U. S. mint is known as the Franklin penny although the immortal Ben was in no way connected with its issue; but as it bears on its face and apothegm—Mind Your Business—which reads like one of his sayings, it was early attributed to Franklin, and still goes by his name. The regular series, however, commences with the 1793 cent, of which there are three types and fifteen varieties. From this date we have a regular yearly issue, broken only in 1815, in which year no cents were issued from our mint.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Dan Burford.—Send a copy of your drawing to the Scott Coin Co.

W. Brady, Pa.—By sending to any first-class dealer you can obtain a complete set of Guam stamps for \$4.50.

H. Earl.—Your coin is what is properly called a colonial coin of England. It was struck for Virginia in 1773 and passed as half pence. It is an interesting piece to the American collector, and while tolerably common, sells for fifty cents.

R. R. Kingston, N. Y.—If your 2-cent brown, has no embossing and is on hard white paper, it is a reissue of 1875 and is catalogued at \$7, new or used. A set was issued in 1870-71, on ordinary paper, the 2-cent issue of which is catalogued at \$1.50 new and 2-cent used.

W. I. X.—Your drawing was not distinct enough for us to determine what the coin you refer to is. A flying eagle nickel cent of 1858 is worth just about a cent. Most of the large collectors have such a large stock of cents of that date on hand that they are unwilling to pay anything more for them unless they are in exceptionally fine condition.

Tileston, Randolph, Mass.—Your rubbings are from the following: 1. Turkish 40 paras, 1255 A. H., Abdul Medjid (1839-61), struck in the eighteenth year of his reign; the inscriptions, letters and figures are in Turkish. 2. Is not a coin but a medal of no recognized value struck during the time of George III. in England. 3. A common Italian centesimo of the late King Humbert, of Italy. Intrinsic value in U. S. currency, one-fifth of a cent.

S. M.—There are no premiums on the dollar (silver) of 1859, the 2 cent pieces of 1864, 1865 and 1867, or the small cents of 1858, 1860 and 1863. The half dollars of 1829 and 1832, if good, sell for 75 cents each. The 1838 quarter is worth 50 cents. If you will again examine your piece of 1806, having all the indications of a half dollar, but with no value expressed, you will notice that around the edge the value is expressed as "fifty cents or half a dollar."

NEW PRIZE CONTEST.

"It is to Laugh!"

What is the funniest story you ever heard, boys? What's the latest joke? Do you know any good ones? If you do, here is a chance for you to win some dandy prizes.

We are going to give away these Prizes to the boys who send us the Funniest Stories or the Best Jokes.

The Three Boys Who Send Us the Funniest Stories

will each receive a first-class, up-to-date Banjo. These banjos are beautiful instruments and are warranted in every particular. They have 11-inch calf heads, walnut necks, and veneered finger boards, with celluloid inlaid position dots, raised frets, twenty-four nickel brackets and wired edge. These instruments can be easily mastered, and every boy should jump at the opportunity to win one.

The Five Boys Who Send Us the Next Funniest Stories

will each receive a complete Magic Trick Outfit, including the Magician's Mill, the Columbus Egg, the Enchanted Money Box, the Magician's Whip, the Enchanted Rose, the Ghostly Finger, the Magic Box, the Great Transformer, the Phantom Ring, the Magic Dice, and the Fire Eater. Besides all the magic tricks, the outfit includes a private instruction book for the use of the operator.

The Ten Boys Who Send Us the Next Funniest Stories

will each receive a pair of heavy Military Regulation Leggings, just the thing for winter wear while coasting, or skating, or for tramping the snow. Warm and durable. Made of extra heavy brown canvas, with four straps.

Send in your stories at once, boys. All the best ones will be published on another page. Watch for them! Some of the funniest stories, jolliest jokes and side-splitting grinds ever heard are going to appear there.

This contest will close February 1. Remember, whether your story wins a prize or not, it stands a good chance of being published, together with your name.

To become a contestant for these prizes, you must cut out the Prize Contest Coupon, printed herewith; fill it out properly, and mail it to NICK CARTER WEEKLY, care of Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York City, together with your story. No story will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it.

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